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ABSTRACT

The speaker accepts the theory that nothing happens for the betterment of education until the superintendent develops an educational climate that is conducive to a healthy learning situation and a positive attitude from the community. A healthy climate is greatly enhanced when the process of personnel evaluation starts with the board and the superintendent and includes all other personnel within the school district. (Author/IRT)

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
108th Annual Convention
Atlantic City, N.J. February 20-23, 1976

SPEAKER: Abe L. Hammons, Superintendent of Schools, Warren, OH

TOPIC: The Superintendent's Role in Teacher Evualuation, Retention, and Dismissal

PLACE: Edwardo Room, Howard Johnson's

TIME: 2:30 PM, Sunday, February 22

PROGRAM: Page 68

Summary of Remarks

School districts across the nation have functioned with the philosophy that the major need for evaluation centers in the classroom. This is a normal assumption due to the fact that focus on the learning process is more closely affiliated with the instructor than any other part of educational personnel. The instructor who has day to day contact with the learner makes this a focal point for critics of education. Criticism and resistance from teachers has been an outgrowth of this philosophy. In reality, if we examine the success of the educational process in any school district, quality of program directly reflects the leadership which is provided by the superintendent, supportive personnel and building leadership.

In approaching the title, "The Superintendent's Role in Teacher Evaluation - Retention or Dismissal", I shall approach my topic from a different vantage point, accepting the theory that nothing happens for the betterment of education until the superintendent develops an educational climate which is conducive to a healthy learning situation and a positive attitude from the community

The quality of evaluation in a school district obviously reflects a commitment of the board and superintendent to set and achieve educational goals based on needs of the learner as substantiated by research. A healthy climate is greatly enhanced when the process of personnel evaluation starts with the board and the superintendent and includes all other personnel within the school district.

If we are to answer the accountability mandate of the public, we must consider the quality of performance on a day by day basis, reflecting a carefully organized plan for the utilization of expertise of each employee.

In considering what brings about masterful performance, obviously a clear knowledge on the part of each individual as to his or her educational assignment becomes a necessity. Industrial leaders would not consider employment of personnel without clearly communicating to the individual the expectation of the management team. Those of us who have spent a number of years in leadership roles are cognizant of the importance of a positive involvement on the part of personnel in planning. implementing and evaluating program.

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My major thrust centers around the importance of the leader in establishing an educational climate which is conducive to personnel being free to utilize educational expertise without fear of reprisal. Confidence on the part of employees that competent assistance and guidance will be provided is imperative. Professionally, the highest priority in the school district is meeting the individual needs of the learner.

Evaluation, as viewed by professional personnel, focuses upon a fair and equal approach to the entire educational family. Great difficulty in implementation and utilization of instructional evaluation has been evidenced when instructional staff questions the intelligent use of budget for supportive personnel and/or building leadership who, in their opinion, do not perform at a high level of proficiency. Generally, teacher organizations are greatly opposed to accountability, particularly when board's commit only instructional staff to the process. A more positive approach to instructional improvement would center around the concept of staff development for the major part of educational personnel rather than evaluation which, unfortunately, is all to often equated to dismissal. A great deal of psychological damage has been dealt the evaluation process due to utilization of data collected by educational leaders and utilized for dismissal of incompetent personnel.

The personnel in many school districts in our country, including the instructors, endorse a staff development program whereby the educational leader and invidivual instructor works cooperatively in analyzing and identifying areas which reflect a need for improvement. Philosophically, change in an individual only takes place when he personally recognizes his limitations.

Development of effective inservice program has not been a first priority of educators in America; therefore, intensive planning for the implementation of a systematic staff development program would greatly enhance staff acceptance and quality of education in most communities.

Collection of data and selection of acceptable instruments which will reflect valid information is a challange to most educational leaders and instructors. Collection and constructive use of data for improvement of instruction is new to the profession. Analyzing data in staff development procedures focuses upon need for continuous scrutiny since concomitant learnings are evident as professionals proceed with evaluation on a year to year basis.

Few, if any, evaluation programs in this country have included board involvement. Without system-wide goals developed cooperatively by the board and leadership of the school district, evaluation lessens in effectiveness.

Goals as designed and adopted by the board serve as perimeters for all personnel in education as they formulate year to year targets. In viewing the superintendent's role, his expertise is challanged to bring about a unified commitment from the board to support the goals of the school district.

Educational goals, when placed in order of priority by the board of education, serve as the superintendent's job description.

Many boards of education and educational leaders face grave difficulty in development of goals for the school district. However, this need not be a great concern since availability of expertise in developing, conducting and analyzing a needs assessment is readily

accessible in most communities.

Positive support for the board becoming involved in development of educational goals and direction of the school district is reflected by their appropriation of funds for support of the evaluation program.

Superintendents providing quality leadership occasionally are concerned by lack of sound criteria for retention and dismissal of fellow colleagues. They must be constantly cognizant that their position is classified as a high risk profession.

The superintendent's role becomes more and more important in the educational climate for development of evaluation and/or any other high priority program in a school district when you consider his responsibilities---such as development of a cohesive board, educational objectives, staff development, year by year up-date for curriculum, establishment of student and community needs, a process of involving the public in educational decisions and a healthy climate with the news media.

It is imperative for the superintendent to assist the board in establishing educational priorities that directly reflect community needs and are supported by sound research. The superintendent's role of developing a team effort governed by shared management in the school district is a major responsibility which enhances the employee's potential of answering accountability demands of taxpayers.

It further behooves the educational leader to reflect fairness and openness in the manner of which the evaluation process is developed and adopted. Instructional staff particularly have concerns when evaluation programs are implemented that do not include those under the superintendent's immediate supervision, resource personnel and building leadership.

Seemingly, the superintendent's role in utilizing the evaluation process, starting at his level, would necessitate a delegation of responsibilities whereby he and supportive personnel would be the first evaluated and the process would infiltrate all other levels of personnel in the school district.

The leader has a responsibility to prepare and present thorough inservice - a committee developed program representing personnel of the entire school district. Delegation of responsibilities and lack of involvement on the part of the superintendent, in many cases lessens effectiveness of program potential. Active participation on the committee reflects personal support in development of philosophy, the process and the instrument for the school district.

The challenge of translating priorities of the board and superintendent to supportive personnel becomes a major task. As the shared management concept gains momentum, it is obvious that supportive personnel, assistant superintendents, directors, supervisors, etc., lose effectiveness if communication channels from the leader and the board are not open.

Techniques and effectiveness for transmitting the educational philosophy and goals to the community are greatly enhanced by the team approach. Therefore, it is essential that communications are effectively established within the management team.

The greatest change in education in the past century centers around characteristics required by leaders through a team effort versus the dictatorial philosophy. As the management team concept becomes a reality, educational leaders must tactfully develop techniques whereby expertise and goal setting are transmitted to the staff.

The building principal occupies one of the most important positions in education. It is his task to set the educational climate within the school and the community which he serves. Through shared management the total school district benefits by the building leader's knowledge and acceptance of the system philosophy and educational goals.

The task of the building leader setting priorities on his time whereby he is truly involved in curriculum, evaluation and other areas which affect the actual learning process of the students is of major importance. Goals as designed by the staff of each school serve as the criteria for evaluating the principal's effectiveness.

Since screening and selection of personnel is the major factor of control of the learning process, the building principal should hold evaluation of his staff as a major priority. Building leaders have extensive preparation in major and minor fields, however, they cannot effectively evaluate personnel in all areas. The training program for professionals does not allow extensive preparation or exposure in other areas of curriculum. As an effective organizer, he should be able to delegate the evaluation process to personnel who possess expertise in specialty areas of curriculum. Delegation of responsibility to department chairmen and/or team leaders has been of great concern to many educators. In reality, the building principal should utilize the team management concept, thereby capitalizing on the expertise of supportive personnel in the school system.

As school districts consider development of evaluation programs, obviously a needs assessment will expedite a positive reaction from personnel involved. Communication to the board regarding this research sets the stage for approval and inclusion of staff involvement in planning, implementing and evaluating the program.

Psychologically, the development of an intensive program to be utilized as a model is effective. The time table regarding step by step process in communicating with the public and the staff sets a positive committee climate. After the model has been utilized on an experimental basis and recommendations are in final order, revisions are made in the instrument.

Selection of the appraisal committee determines the acceptance level by the total staff after the committee charge is completed. Representatives from the community and all levels of the professional staff (instructional staff, supportive personnel, building leadership, lay citizenry, etc.) will enhance the dissemination of information and open channels of communications.

Quality of education directly parallels the evaluation program. The board and superintendent would focus upon the screening, selection and evaluation of personnel as a top priority. A further obligation of those in charge of the school district is an ongoing, positive staff development program.

Agressive school districts looking for positive direction utilize educational goals as perimeters for total function of the educational program. Therefore, the appraisal committee adopts goals for the evaluation process. Espirit de corps is greatly enhanced and personnel becomes positive and more effective when a job description is utilized.

Acceptance of the appraisal program closely parallels simplification of mechanics of the instrument and thoroughness of communication to personnel. Interpretation of the role (evaluator and evaluatee) of those utilizing the evaluation process determines the degree of effectiveness.

Results of an evaluation program focus upon an awareness of the quality of the professional's performance. Identification of areas that need attention and documented data reflect the status of personnel effectiveness.

Accountability in education begins with personnel since the quality of the educative process is determined by professionals in the field and not by finances, materials or pupil-teacher ratio.

In analyzing philosophy of evaluation and purpose of staff development, the major priority must be concentrated on a continuous, constructive, cooperative experience for those affected by the program.

The prime objective is improvement of the learning process for the student and continuous professional growth for the personnel.

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